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### VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS

Directed shark **bottom longline** vessels located between 33° N and 36° 30' N are required to operate a VMS unit from January through July. Shark **gillnet** vessels are required to operate a VMS unit during the Right Whale Calving Season (Nov. 15 to Mar. 31) regardless of fishing location.

### OBSERVER PROGRAM

Fishermen with a commercial shark permit may be selected to carry an observer. If selected, you are required to carry an observer on every trip unless notified otherwise. Information on how to comply with the observer requirement will be specified in the selection package. Compliance includes all U.S. Coast Guard and NMFS safety regulations such as having a valid safety decal for your vessel, having a useable life raft that will fit everyone on board, and providing the observer with the same accommodations as any crew member. Please call HMS Management Division at (301) 713-2347 for details.

### UPCOMING EVENTS AND RECENT UPDATES

Schedule for Shark I.D. and Safe Handling and Release Workshops- Winter 2006  
Small Coastal Stock Assessment- 2007  
HMS Identification Guide - Available now  
Large Coastal Stock Assessment- Available now  
Dusky Shark Stock Assessment- Available now

### UPCOMING REGULATIONS

Dehooking and Disentanglement Requirements: NMFS published a proposed rule on March 26, 2006 (71 FR 15680), that would require bottom longline vessel operators to possess, maintain, and utilize the same sea turtle de-hooking and disentanglement equipment, and follow the same protocols as required in the pelagic longline fishery. NMFS expects to publish a final rule regarding these measures in Fall 2006.

NMFS recently completed two stock assessments, one for large coastal sharks, and one for dusky sharks. As a result, NMFS may be changing the annual quota for these species in the near future.

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### HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT PERMITS

If you own or operate a charter/headboat vessel that fishes for Atlantic HMS, including sharks, you must have an Atlantic HMS Charter headboat category permit. The permit can be purchased online at [www.hmspermits.com](http://www.hmspermits.com) or by calling 888-872-8862. If you have both a Charter headboat category and a commercial shark permit, you may sell sharks when the season is open. When the commercial shark season is closed, you may land (but not sell) sharks under the recreational limits if engaged in a for-hire trip. A for-hire trip is defined as a trip carrying a fee-paying passenger; or having more than three persons for a vessel licensed to carry six or fewer; or having more persons aboard that the number of crew specified on the vessel's Certificate of Inspection for U.S. Coast Guard inspected vessels. The number of persons aboard includes the operator and crew, and the retention limits would also apply to the operator and crew.

### RECREATIONAL PERMITS

If you do not intend to sell sharks, you can take sharks recreationally if you have an HMS Angling category permit. There is a bag limit (1 shark per vessel per trip) and size limit (4.5 ft or 1.37m fork length for all sharks except Atlantic sharpnose and bonnethead) for recreationally-caught sharks. HMS permit holders must abide by all applicable Federal regulations, regardless of where fishing occurs, including in state waters. When fishing in the waters of a state with more stringent regulations, vessels must abide by the more restrictive state regulations. HMS Angling permits can be purchased online at [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov) or by calling 888-872-8862.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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Contact: Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Mike Clark, or Chris Rilling at (301) 713-2347.

If your marina or fishing club would like to receive regular shark postings from our HMS E-mail network, please contact the HMS Management Division at (301) 713-2347. Alternatively, information about *all* Federal fisheries, including the shark fishery, can be obtained electronically via FISHNEWS. Please see [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov) to sign up for this service.

### Important Phone Numbers

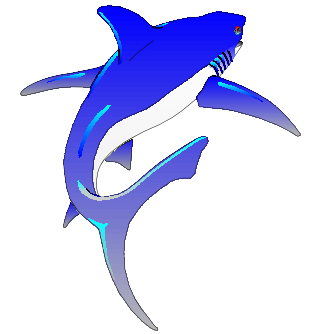
Enforcement Hotline	800-853-1964
Southeast HMS Office	727-824-5399
Northeast HMS Office	978-281-9260
HMS Headquarters Office	301-713-2347
HMS Infoline	800-894-5528
Southeast Permit Office	888-872-8862

Highly Migratory Species Management Division SF1  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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# Atlantic Shark Commercial Fishery Regulations



## National Marine Fisheries Service

Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
Highly Migratory Species Management  
Division

This pamphlet was prepared in October 2006 to provide interested fishermen a summary of the commercial fishing regulations for Atlantic sharks. A copy of complete fishery regulations that apply to HMS fishermen may be found at 50 CFR part 635 or obtained by calling the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. If there is a discrepancy between the regulations in 50 CFR part 635 and this brochure, the regulations will take precedence.

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**COMMERCIAL SHARK FISHING PERMITS**

Owners of vessels used to fish commercially for Atlantic sharks or who intend to sell sharks are required to obtain a shark limited access commercial permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Without this permit, fishermen who fish in Federal waters cannot sell sharks. Under the limited access program, NMFS is no longer issuing new commercial shark permits. To obtain a permit, you must transfer a permit, within the upgrading restrictions, from someone who is leaving the fishery. Prior to renewing or obtaining a shark limited access permit, you must attend a protected species safe handling and release workshop, and submit a copy of the workshop certificate with your permit application package. For information on permit renewal and transfers, please contact the Southeast Regional Permit Office at (727) 570-5326. Fishermen with a commercial shark fishing permit must abide by Federal regulations even within state waters unless that state has more restrictive regulations.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Fishermen with a commercial shark permit are required to report fishing activities in an approved logbook. Logbooks must be filled out within 48 hours of fishing or before offloading, whichever is sooner. Logbooks must be submitted to NMFS within 7 days of offloading. Weighout slips for fish sold must accompany the logbook submission. Additionally, selected permit holders may be required to report cost and earnings information. This information must be submitted within 30 days of offloading. Please call the HMS Management Division at (301) 713-2347 for details.

**SELLING SHARKS**

Sharks and shark fins can only be sold to permitted dealers. Dealers can obtain a shark dealer permit by contacting the Southeast Regional Permit Office at (888) 872-8862.

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**FISHING SEASONS**

There are 3 fishing seasons: Jan. 1 through April 3; May 1 through Aug. 31; and Sept. 1 through Dec. 31.

**FISHING REGIONS**

The large and small coastal shark commercial quotas are split between 3 regions:  
Gulf of Mexico: TX through west coast of FL;  
South Atlantic: east coast of FL through NC including the Caribbean; and,  
North Atlantic: VA through ME.  
When a region is closed for a particular species group, fishermen in that region cannot fish for species in that group and dealers in that region cannot buy species in that group from Federally permitted fishermen.

**ANNUAL QUOTAS**

Large Coastal: 1,017 mt dw or 2,242,078 lbs dw; 52% to Gulf of Mexico, 41% to S. Atl., 7% to N. Atl.  
Small Coastal: 454 mt dw or 1,000,888.4 lbs dw; 10% to Gulf of Mexico, 87% to S. Atl., 3% to N. Atl.  
Blue: 273 mt dw or 601,855.8 lbs dw  
Porbeagle: 92 mt dw or 202,823.2 lbs dw  
Other pelagic: 488 mt dw or 1,075,844.8 lbs dw  
The quotas are currently split equally between each fishing season and may be adjusted to account for over- and underharvests from the 2005 seasons.

**CLOSURE DATES**

Large coastal shark fishery closure dates are announced before the start of each fishing season. The fishing season is not re-opened once closed.  
Small coastal shark and pelagic shark fisheries are monitored during the season. If needed, fishermen will be given 14 days notice of a fishery closure. Call the HMS Management Division at (301) 713-2347 for information regarding current openings and closings.

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**SPECIES THAT MAY BE KEPT**

Large Coastal Sharks: Sandbar, Tiger, Silky, Blacktip, Spinner, Nurse, Lemon, Bull, Great hammerhead, Smooth hammerhead, and Scalloped hammerhead. Small Coastal Sharks: Atlantic sharpnose, Finetooth, Blacknose, and Bonnethead. Pelagic Sharks: Shortfin mako, Common thresher, Porbeagle, Oceanic whitetip, Blue

**SPECIES THAT MUST BE RELEASED**

Prohibited species: White, Dusky, Sand tiger, Bigeye sand tiger, Whale, Basking, Bignose, Galapagos, Night, Caribbean reef, Narrowtooth, Caribbean sharpnose, Smalltail, Atlantic angel, Longfin mako, Bigeye thresher, Sevengill, Sixgill, and Bigeye sixgill.  
If you catch a prohibited species, you **must release** that fish to the sea immediately with a minimum of injury and without removing the fish from the water. If you are not sure of the species and whether you may keep it, release it.

**RETENTION LIMITS**

Directed Shark Permits: During open seasons, directed shark permit holders may keep up to 4,000 lbs. dressed weight of large coastal sharks per vessel per trip. There are no retention limits for pelagic or small coastal sharks.  
Incidental Shark Permits: During open seasons, incidental shark permit holders may keep up to 5 large coastal sharks per vessel per trip and 16 pelagic or small coastal sharks (all species combined) per vessel per trip.

**LANDING RESTRICTIONS**

Sharks harvested from the management unit cannot be filleted or cut into pieces at sea. The 2<sup>nd</sup> dorsal and anal fins must remain attached to shark carcasses through landing. Sharks may be eviscerated and the heads and all other fins may be removed.

**SHARK FINS**

Shark fins cannot exceed 5% of the dressed weight of the carcasses. No fins may remain on board the vessel after the first point of landing.

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**AUTHORIZED GEARS**

Authorized gears include: pelagic or bottom longline, gillnet, rod and reel, handline, or bandit gear. Time/area closures and other gear-specific regulations may apply. Handlines must remain attached to, or in contact with, the fishing vessel. Please call the HMS Management Division at (301) 713-2347 for more information.

**BOTTOM LONGLINE GEAR RESTRICTIONS**

- Bottom longline (BLL) vessels must post sea turtle handling and release guidelines in their wheelhouse. Guidelines can be obtained on the HMS webpage or by calling (301) 713-2347.
- As of February 1, 2004, BLL vessels will need to: have corrodible non-stainless steel hooks; have and use line cutters and dipnets; and move 1 nmi after an interaction with a protected species. See upcoming regulations for potential additional requirements.
- As of January 1, 2005, an area between Oregon Inlet and Cape Fear, North Carolina will be closed to directed shark vessels with BLL gear on board from January through July of each year. The ratio of demersal to pelagic indicator species onboard the vessel and landed can be used by enforcement to distinguish between gear types.

**GILLNET GEAR RESTRICTIONS**

- Directed shark gillnet vessels are required to have 100% observer coverage during Right Whale Calving Season and ~50% observer coverage the rest of the year. Selected vessels will be notified. If you are not sure if you need an observer, call John Carlson at (850) 234-6541 x221.
- If a whale is *sighted* while fishing with a gillnet, the vessel operator must call the Southeast Fisheries Science Center at (305) 862-2850 and cease fishing immediately.
- Gillnet vessels must conduct net checks every 2 hours to look for, and remove, any protected species. This is the only time while fishing that the gillnet is allowed to be detached from the vessel.